

Progress Report on the National Aquatic Animal Health Task Force on Aquaculture

July 15, 2004

Submitted on behalf of the Task Force by the Federal Executive Committee
John Clifford (APHIS), Spencer Garrett (NOAA Fisheries), and Thomas Bell (FWS).

Executive Summary:

This progress report summarizes the activities of the National Aquatic Animal Health Task Force on Aquaculture from its first meeting in December, 2001, to the present. Since 2001, significant steps have been made by the Task Force towards accomplishing its mission - the development of a national aquatic animal health plan. A plan outline and process for development have been approved by the participating Federal agencies. The first three chapters of the plan have been completed and input has been obtained via work groups for three more of the chapters. In addition to making progress on achieving its mission, the Task Force has been an important vehicle for providing information to stakeholders on a variety of issues related to aquatic animal health and aquaculture. To date, the Task Force is operating within scheduled time lines to meets its objective of completing the plan by 2006.

Background:

The National Aquatic Animal Health Task Force (Task Force) on Aquaculture is commissioned under the auspices of the Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture (JSA), National Science and Technology Council's Committee on Science, Office of the Executive. The mission of the Task Force is to develop a national plan (National Aquatic Animal Health Plan - NAAHP) which provides for: efficient, safe, and effective national and international commerce of aquatic animals; protection of cultured and wild aquatic animals from foreign pests and diseases; the U.S. government to meet its legal trade obligations; and, the availability of diagnostic and certification services for public, private, and tribal entities. This progress report will provide information on our approach to achieving this mission, a list of major milestones, a list of major meetings where presentations have been made on the NAAHP, and Task Force plans for the upcoming year.

The Task Force is composed of representatives from the following federal agencies: USDA/APHIS, Interior/FWS, and Commerce/NOAA Fisheries. Lead policy people from these agencies, who also comprise the Federal Executive Committee (FEC) are: John Clifford (APHIS), Tom Bell (FWS), and Spencer Garrett (NOAA). The Task Force meets in-person at least quarterly and more frequently via conference call. All draft work products of the Task Force must be approved by the FEC prior to distribution to the public for comment. It is the intent of the Task Force that all elements of the NAAHP will be developed based on science, in a transparent manner, consistent with international standards, and in collaboration with our many stakeholders. An outline of the plan and process by which it is being developed has been shared with the JSA and with our stakeholders. .

Process for drafting NAAHP:

Our approach to writing the NAAHP is transparent and inclusive - we respect and invite the viewpoints of all interested parties. The Task Force believes that the use of "work groups" is a sound approach in soliciting input to the plan. Work group (WG) members are invited by the Task Force when considering input on a specific chapter/topic of the plan. Typically, scientists who are experts in the field being discussed are invited. As the nature of the chapters vary greatly, different people with different skill sets have been and will be invited to participate on the working groups in the future. It is important to note that these work groups are not advisory in nature and are only providing ideas to the Task Force, who in turn draft the chapters of NAAHP. As draft chapters are completed and approved by the FEC, they are

shared with the JSA and stakeholders. Critical review and comments are requested. Please examine **Attachment 1, Flow chart for chapter development**, to better understand the process by which work groups feed into the process. To date, three work groups have been convened: WG 1 - Roles and responsibilities of aquatic animal health professionals; WG 2 - Diseases of regulatory significance and their surveillance; and, WG 3 - Laboratory testing procedures. The Task Force is grateful to the experts and their organizations which participated in WGs 1-3. Meeting reports for WGs 1-3 have been distributed to working group participants, the JSA, and stakeholders. Our experience and feedback from participants on the first three work groups indicate that our approach is sound, meetings have been productive, and the Task Force is on the right track. We are in the process of planning work group meetings for this coming year.

Progress on chapters of NAAHP:

The first three draft chapters of NAAHP have been approved by the FEC and are in the process of being circulated to the JSA members and stakeholders. These chapters are: 1) Introduction, 2) Definitions, and 3) Current roles of state, federal, and tribal governments. Additional draft chapters of the NAAHP are scheduled to be completed this year. Please refer to **Attachment 2, Progress Chart for NAAHP**, to understand the anticipated time lines for development of the chapters of the plan.

Awareness and communication:

A major area of focus by the Task Force is communication and awareness. We realize there are many individuals and organizations who are very interested in the progress of NAAHP. To that end, the Task Force is increasing its efforts to provide information to interested parties, such as this progress report. Members of the Task Force have made numerous presentations to a variety of stakeholder groups to keep them informed on the efforts of the Task Force (see below). We are moving ahead with a web-based information page which will include updates on NAAHP and Task Force activities. This web page will be managed by APHIS with links on the web pages of NOAA Fisheries and FWS.

The Federal Executive Committee appreciates the continued support of our efforts by private industry, government agencies, and other interested stakeholders. The Task Force is planning to hold another major stakeholder meeting in association with Aquaculture America, in New Orleans, in January, 2005. This will be yet another great opportunity for you and your organization to provide feedback to the Task Force. In the meantime, if you have anything you would like to share with the Task Force, please do so by sending an e-mail to one of the following individuals: Jill Rolland (Jill.B.Rolland@aphis.usda.gov) , Marilyn "Guppy" Blair (Marilyn_J_Blair@r1.fws.gov), or Kevin Amos (Kevin.Amos@noaa.gov).

Challenges to NAAHP development:

The three Federal agencies responsible for developing the NAAHP: APHIS, FWS, and NOAA Fisheries, have contributed significant resources to assist in completing this project. As emerging domestic and international aquatic health issues require more time of staff that are developing the NAAHP, it becomes more difficult to meet the schedule as described in Attachment 2. It is hoped that additional resources are identified in the FY 05 to maintain the timely progress of NAAHP development.

Major milestones (by date):

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| Dec, 2001. | First national meeting with stakeholders to discuss aquaculture's needs and potential components of a national plan. Major product of meeting: Mission statement for Task Force developed. |
| June, 2002. | Second meeting with stakeholders to discuss import and export issues and potential diseases to be considered for NAAHP. Major product of meeting: Discussion on diseases important to aquaculture and identified need for harmonization of export certificates and procedures between federal agencies. |

April, 2003	Meeting of the FEC. Major product of meeting: Outline of NAAHP approved by FEC.
Jan, 2004	The process by which NAAHP would be developed (“PLANOPS”) approved by FEC. WG 1 (Roles and responsibilities of fish health professionals) and WG 2 (Diseases and their surveillance) meet to provide input for relevant chapters of NAAHP. Major product of meeting: Implementation of process to solicit input from stakeholders; meeting reports of WGs 1 and 2.
April, 2004	WG 3 (Laboratory testing protocols and accreditation) convenes to provide input for relevant chapter in NAAHP. Output: Meeting report of WG 3.
April, 2004	Meeting of Task Force and FEC. Major products: Review and approval of ongoing work group process; review and approval by FEC of first three chapters of NAAHP; review and approval of future work groups; assignment to Task Force to produce a progress report to stakeholders and JSA (completed via this document in July, 2004).
July, 2004	Next meeting of Task Force and FEC, Washington D.C.
Sept, 2004	WG 4 Disease program standards for salmonid species group. Twin Falls, Idaho
Nov, 2004	WG 5 Disease program standards for warm water finfish. New Orleans
Dec, 2004	WG 6 Disease program standards for ornamental finfish. Ruskin, Florida
Jan, 2005	Major Task Force and stakeholder meeting in association with Aquaculture America, New Orleans.

Presentations by Task Force on NAAHP since 2003 and (*future scheduled events*)

Aquaculture America/National Aquaculture Association: February, 2003 and 2004

American Fisheries Society/Fish Health Section: June, 2003 and (*July, 2004*)

National Association of State Aquaculture Coordinators: June, 2003 and 2004

International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: March, 2004, and (*Sept., 2004*)

American Veterinary Medical Association: July, 2003 and (*July, 2004*)

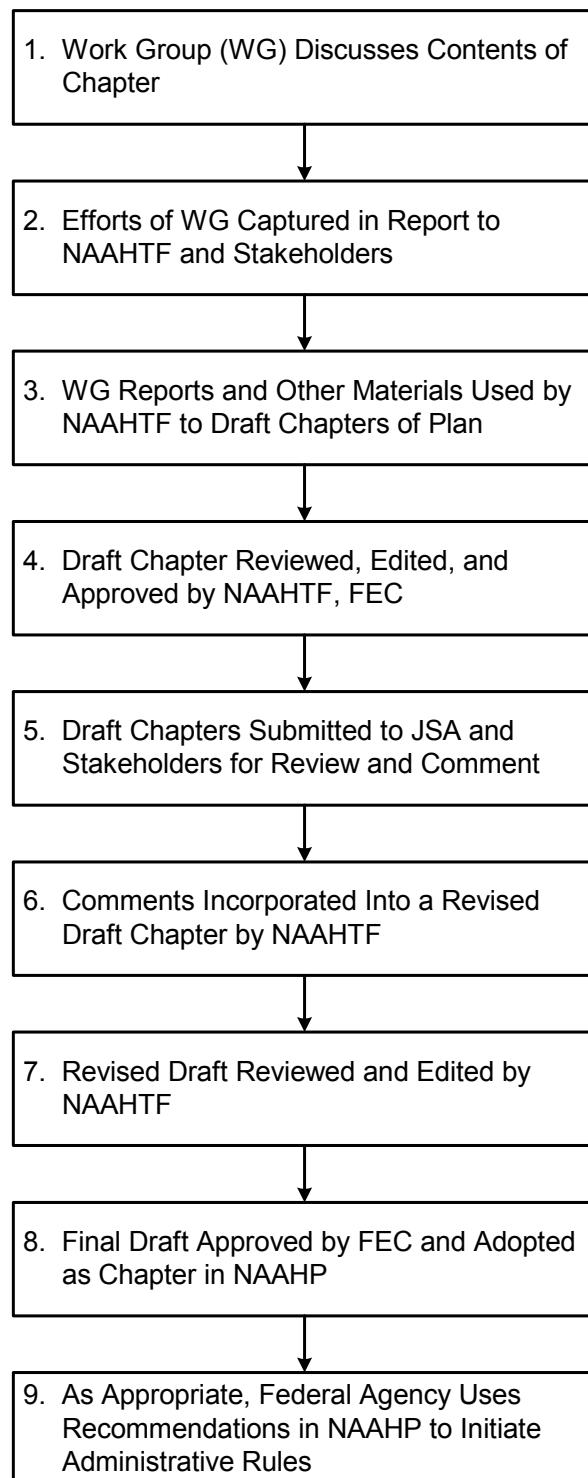
U.S. Animal Health Association: (*October, 2004*)

U.S. Trout Farmers Association: (*September, 2004*)

Variety of local, state and regional meetings of organizations with interest in aquatic animal health

Attachment 1:

**FLOW CHART for the DEVELOPMENT and IMPLEMENTATION
of the NATIONAL AQUATIC ANIMAL HEALTH PLAN (NAAHP)**



NAAHTF = National Aquatic Animal Health Task Force
JSA = Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture
FEC = Federal Executive Committee of the NAAHTF

Attachment 2: PROGRESS CHART FOR NATIONAL AQUATIC ANIMAL HEALTH PLAN

(last updated 4/15/04)

Chapters of Health Plan and date activity completed

(Dates in *italics* represent anticipated completion dates)

Steps	Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.	Work Groups Discuss Contents of Chapter	04-03	04-03	08-03	01-04	01-04 <i>thru 06-04</i>	06-04 <i>thru 11-04</i>	06-05	06-05	08-05	10-03 and ongoing	Ongoing
2.	1 st draft submitted to NAAHTF for review	8-03	08-03	08-03	03-04	03-04 <i>thru 10-04</i>	11-04	08-05	08-05	09-05	03-04	04-06
3.	Comments on 1 st draft from NAAHTF due to authors	09-03	09-03	10-03	04-04	04-04 <i>thru 11-04</i>	12-04					
4.	Revised draft submitted to FEC for prelim. approval	10-03	10-03	10-03	05-04	04-04- <i>thru 12-04</i>	01-05					
5.	FEC approve revised draft	10-03	10-03	10-03	06-04	12-04	01-05					
6.	Revised Draft	11-03	11-03	11-03	06-04	12-04	01-05					
7.	Clean revised Draft Submitted											
8.	Edited Revision proof-read by Task Force	12-03	12-03	12-03	07-04	01-05	02-05					
9.	Clean, revised draft submitted to JSA and stakeholders for comment	12-03	12-03	12-03	07-04	01-05	02-05	12-05	12-05	12-05		
10.	Deadline for comment from JSA and stakeholders	02-04	02-04	02-04	08-04	03-05	04-05	01-06	01-06	01-06		
11.	Final draft submitted to FEC	03-04	03-04	03-04	09-04	04-05	06-05					
12.	Deadline for FEC approval	04-04	04-04	04-04	10-04	05-05	07-05					
13.	Completed chapter adopted as part of NAAHP	04-04	04-04	04-04	10-04	06-05	07-05	02-06	02-06			